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MY FIRST TRIP UP THE MAGDALENA, AND LIFE IN THE HEART OF THE ANDES.

By J. A. BENNETT (late U. S. Consul at Bogota, South America).

We left New York on a bright cold day in January, upon the schooner *China Samaria*, and on the seventh day were sailing through Mono Passage, with the island of Santo Domingo on our right hand, and Puerto Rico on our left. A fresh trade-wind swept us rapidly through this beautiful channel, and out upon the Caribbean sea. On the sixth day thereafter, we found ourselves gazing through vapory clouds at one of the grandest Sierra Nevadas on earth. Santa Martha's great mountain stands like a sentinel of the sea, the base washed by the ocean, and three and a half miles above the troubled waters the snow upon the embattled crest reflects the sunlight in quiet peace; but the winds rush down its giant sides with angry growl and roar, and our little craft of seventy-five tons reeled beneath the pressure.

Many miles distant from the mountain we used to lie down upon the deck of the vessel, in order to secure a complete view of its summit. This Andean monster is near our first point of destination, and within half an hour we sail into the harbor of Santa Martha; before us lies the sleepy town, in the lap of great mountains.

The prominent features of Santa Martha are its cathedral, custom-house, and Moro castle, which latter is built upon an immense rock at the entrance to the harbor. This town was the first settlement on the coast, and occupies a large place in the history of the Conquest. The buildings are constructed of sundried bricks, with walls from three to four feet thick, and roofed with red tiles; they are, with few exceptions, one-story high, and built in that manner for greater security to life in event of earthquakes, with which Santa Martha has been fearfully shaken. These people respect an earthquake, and build their houses accordingly.

Having letters to a prominent resident merchant, Don Joaquin de Mier, we called to pay our respects, and were kindly received. I mention this gentleman from the fact that when General Bolivar—who has been called the "Washington of South America"—fled for his life from Bogota, the same Señor De Mier received, and protected him. He conducted Bolivar to his country seat, San Pedro, and endeavored to cheer and divert his mind from the ingratitude of his countrymen. But the effort was vain, for in a few weeks he died of a broken heart, only 47 years of age! Twelve years passed before his native state, Venezuela, petitioned New Grenada for his remains! The request was granted, and all that was mortal of the immortal Bolivar was disinterred and reburied at Caracas, amid great display.

After a detention of 20 days in passing our goods at the custom-house, which were then securely placed in our boat, or *bungo*, we stepped on board, and bade good-bye to Santa Martha. A bungo is a queer-looking craft, and may be called an overgrown canoe. It is made from the trunk of a single tree, and will carry from 20 to 100 cargoes; a "cargo" is a mule's load, packed in two boxes or bales, and weighing 125 pounds each. The bungo in which we embarked was sufficiently large to transport 50 cargoes; she had a mast and square

sail; a *patroon* (captain) and six *bogas*, as the men who navigate such a craft are called. With a brisk trade-wind, in half an hour we were skirting the shore of the Caribbean sea, and as our bongo had no keel, and was much the shape of a barrel, we rolled uncomfortably until 6 o'clock in the afternoon, when, shooting through the breakers into Cienega Grande—a large marshy lake—we were again on smooth water, and presently drew to the shore at Pueblo Viejo. We hung our hammocks in a house near the lake, and endeavored to forget our weariness in sleep; but long before daylight the continuous hum of voices induced us to leave our hammocks to ascertain the cause of disturbance at this unwonted hour. Upon opening the door we gazed upon a scene that filled us with surprise and pleasure. From the front of our house to the border of the lake is the Plaza, or market-place, and moonlight revealed to us many groups of women and children selling fish, vegetables, fruit, salt, and cotton fabrics, who had come in canoes thus early to avoid the heat. Along the shore, and extending out on the lake, we counted some forty canoes moored, and others, gliding back and forth, with gaily dressed women propelling and directing them. The beautiful islands, the placid waters, the thickly-clustered canoes, the picturesque groups of the market-place, the old village, and the bright tropical moon looking down upon the scene, even now rises before me as a "thing of beauty." The Sabbath is market-day in Spanish America. The majority of the people live far away from marts of trade, and Sunday they attend mass, buy and sell—thus "killing two birds with one stone." But when the host is elevated, which is known by the ringing of a bell, trade is suspended—even if they are in the midst of an important negotiation—their hats are lifted, and one and all fall upon their knees, on the pavement, devout worshippers.

We left Pueblo Viejo at mid-day, and in passing over Cienega Grande saw, for the first time, villages built on spiles. The inhabitants gain a livelihood by supplying fish to those living on the adjacent shore. There is also another class of fishermen inhabiting these lakes, called *caymen* (alligators), that are fearfully numerous, and often measure 25 feet in length. It is no uncommon thing to see at one time 20 or 30 horrible heads thrust above the water, with huge distended jaws containing fish, which the monsters swallow with a snap and then disappear.

After a five-hours' sail we had crossed the lake, and entered the picturesque pass of Rinconáda, which conducted us into Cienega Laredóna. Here we anchored until the moon came up, when we continued our journey, but with great labor, the entire surface of the waters of this lake being covered completely with a rank and dense vegetation, through which, at times, it was hardly possible to move our bongo. Here, too, we had our first experience with mosquitoes—they came singly, in squads, brigades, and whole armies, and stuck to us closer than brothers, until the fresh wind of the morning swept them away.

Emerging from Laredóna, the thick vegetation disappeared, and the remaining portion of our journey to the river was unobstructed. On Tuesday we arrived at Barranquilla, having sailed through seven lakes and six natural canals. All importations and exportations, via Santa Martha, are transported through these inland water-courses, which, though a laborious and expensive undertaking, is less so than by the way of Carthagena.

We had now reached the Magdalena river, which rises in the Andes, near the frontier of Equador, and, after a sinuous course of 900 miles, enters the Caribbean sea. Navigation to and from the sea is not usual, as the ever-changing channels, shallow and dangerous currents, render it hazardous.

The principal affluents of the Magdalena are the Cauca, the Sogomoso, and Bogotá. It is navigable up to the rapids at Honda, 600 miles, and beyond the rapids 150 miles, through a rich and thickly populated country.

The most important town on the Magdalena, commercially speaking, is Barranquilla. Here goods for the interior are transhipped to boats and steamers. The port of Savanilla is only eight miles distant, and is now connected with this town by railroad and canal. Some of the importations, and the greater part of the exportations of the republic, are made through Savanilla. Barranquilla has a population of about 10,000. It is better built than Santa Martha, and the people are engaged in more active pursuits than in any other town on the river. When we left New York we had expected to make the trip in one of the two steamers recently placed on the river, but they were aground, and our only alternative was to continue on in our bongo.

On Wednesday we left Barranquilla, and the next day arrived at Calamar. This place derives its only importance from the fact that a canal, constructed by the state, leaves the Magdalena at this point, and unites its waters with those of the harbor of Carthagena. It has not, however, much improved the commercial prosperity of that once famous city.

Carthagena was renowned in history 200 years ago. It was founded in 1533 by Don Pedro De Herredia, and is the most magnificently walled city in America. These walls, erected near 300 years ago, stand to-day as firm and strong as at the hour of completion, without breach, crack, or the least injury. They are sufficiently broad for a public highway, if required, and the surface is like granite. The process by which they were concreted is said to have perished with the life of the discoverer.

In a recent earthquake, when the massive walls of churches and convents were dangerously cracked, those of the city were uninjured. The harbor, seven miles long, is one of the most beautiful on this continent, and is well fortified. For more than 100 years it was the point of greatest commercial importance in the New World. Carthagena was the grand entrepot of South America; here was the only Spanish custom-house, and it gave to the mother-country an immense revenue. From here the luxuries of Europe were sent by water and mule—a thousand miles into the interior—to Lima, Ecuador and Callao. The population, at the time of Carthagena's highest prosperity, may have been 50,000, but at the present is hardly 20,000. Among the public edifices are churches, convents, town-hall, hospitals, theatre and college. A line of English steamers, connecting the city with Aspinwall and St. Thomas, touch there twice each month. The Spanish army evacuated Carthagena in 1821, driven out by the army of the Republic.

Let us now return to Calamar. We continued our trip up the Magdalena, and on Friday morning arrived at Barranca, a small, meanly-built town. From this point to Carthagena is the road which has been traveled 300 years; upon which is a village called Turbaco, made notorious by the cock-fighting propensities of General Santa Anna, who, after his expulsion from Mexico, took up his residence here. He built a cock-pit, and Sabbaths and feast-days indulged in this degrading sport. From the house we occupied, I have seen him with his thousand doubloons piled up before him, betting on the result of every contest!

At Barranca we met the steamer Magdalena, which, having got off the sand bar up the river, was on her return to Barranquilla, and we regretted we had not awaited her arrival at that place. After a pleasant chat with the American officers we pushed on up the stream, and were scarcely out of sight when we were startled by the loud report of her exploding boilers. The officers, with whom we had just conversed, and fifteen of the crew, passed thus suddenly to their death.

Our thermometer marked 85° in the early morning, and ran up to 100° as the day advanced. We arrived at Mompox in eight days from Barranquilla. The Magdalena, from the coast to this point, is full of interest. It is a grand

river—in places two and three miles wide ; the current flows lazily in parts, but, as a rule, more rapidly than the Mississippi at New Orleans, and, like that river, its waters are very muddy. Cultivation of these rich lands is by no means universal. Corn, tobacco, and sugar-cane attract attention. Bananas, plantains, oranges, lemons, and all tropical fruits grow almost without care, in abundance and perfection. When we behold the broad noisy river, the quiet plain, the reaches of cultivation, the primeval forest, and the glorious mountains, with snow-covered heads, we exclaim, how grand ! But let me fill up the outlines of the picture. Birds of beautiful plumage are on the wing and in the trees ; parrots and macaws, always in pairs ; congregations of monkeys in noisy council ; the tiger upon the shore, bellowing to his enemy the cayman, and ordering him out of the way, that he may safely pass over ; the wild boar roaming the forest and grunting defiance to all his enemies ; the boa constrictor on the border of impenetrable woods, hanging upon trees, ready to grasp his prey and crush it within its contracting folds ; the venomous snake, who, unprovoked, will strike you with his deadly fangs ; the scorpion, giving life to her young, and then stinging them to death. Here, too, the voice of the mosquito is heard in the land, and at night they come upon you a vast and innumerable host ; sand-flies, not larger than a pin's head, are your daily companions, who soon establish a blood relationship with you ; and, to complete the picture, the *nigua*, the smallest and yet the greatest torment of all—so small that, when he enters your flesh, sharp eyes only can see him, but, after a stay of fifteen days, you find he has built his house and lodged a thousand of his progeny therein, which must speedily be exterminated or your life may pay the forfeit. Within the tropics, we have literally eternal spring and summer—but that is not all ; on every tree we find both health and decay, life and death. Our spring and summer are far more enjoyable and beautiful than any so-called tropical paradise. For in those regions torment and danger are on every side, ignore it as we may.

As we are now on ground made historic by the conquest, allow me for a moment to call attention to one or two facts. Thirst for gold was the inspiring and impelling motive which urged forward the Castillians in their subjugation of Mexico and South America. The dangers they dared, the suffering they endured, the crimes they committed while in their mad search for gold, have no parallel in all history. "Give me gold or I die," was the cry of these desperate adventurers. They rushed into the jaws of destruction, impelled by this ignoble aim ; but they thought, with thousands of the present day, that gold was the all of life. If we follow them, as they leave Carthagena and Santa Marta in companies of two and three hundred, we can track them by the ruin and death which marked their pathway. But few of these expeditions were successful in their search for the precious metals, yet almost every page of their history is stained with human blood and unmentionable crimes !

A noble exception occurs to me here. Herredia, the founder of Carthagena, led one of these exploring bands, was absent four months, and returned with \$2,000,000 in gold. He was noted for his humane tendencies, and conducted this expedition in a manner that conciliated the tribes whose territory he invaded. We have instances, though, of his cunning and the peculiar arguments he used in accomplishing his desires. Among the treasures discovered was an image of a wild boar in solid gold, weighing 137 pounds—one of the gods worshiped by the tribe with whom it was found. Herredia interviewed the cacique of the tribe, assured him he could not permit such beastly idolatry, could not see them thus imperil their souls, and therefore he should remove from their midst this great temptation. So eloquently and forcibly did he discourse of the mightier God whom he worshiped, and whom they were constantly and terribly enraging by their idolatry of this special image, that at length the

Indians consented to its removal, and he departed, his conscience satisfied with the logic that had swayed them. Upon the return of this expedition the spoils were divided, and each volunteer was given \$6,000 in gold—the largest amount of money ever received at one time by the common soldier of the armies of Spain in America. Pizarro, who first robbed and then murdered the King of the Incas—Atahualpa—divided among his men \$4,400 each. Hernan Cortes, after conquering Montezuma, King of the Aztecs, gave to each of his followers \$100. The population of New Grenada, at the time of the conquest, was 8,000,000—double the number we had in our Colonies in 1776. The present population of Colombia is not 3,000,000.

After these digressions let us return to Mompox. This city was founded in 1540, seventy years before Hendrick Hudson entered the harbor of New York. It is 150 miles southwest from Santa Martha. Its population is 9,000, but it has been much larger. The temperature ranges from 93° to 98°. The streets are laid out parallel with the river for two miles. There are several churches of imposing appearance, and the houses are much better built than at Santa Martha or Barranquilla. Here are yards for building and repairing river-craft, and at times great activity prevails. As there were no hotels, we hired a house and a cook.

The scenery for some distance above Mompox is exceedingly interesting. The banks of the river are lined with *rosas*—small farms—and the finest fruits of the tropics are seen, as we laboriously work our way past these cultivated patches. At five o'clock we arrived at Margarita, the most beautiful village on the Magdalena. It extends three miles along the river, and the white cottages are completely embowered and overshadowed by orange, lemon, cocoa-nut, mango and tamarind trees. The mangoes and oranges were golden in the sunlight. We purchased 500 of the latter for 25 cents. The people of Colombia have a proverb that oranges are gold in the morning, silver at noon, and lead at night. We noticed many cotton trees, the spontaneous growth of these rich bottom-lands. The cotton is of the finest quality, is sent to England and sold at a high figure. May not these valuable trees be propagated in our Southern States?

Before leaving Mompox we exchanged our bongo for one more suited to the navigation of the Magdalena above this point. We employed a patroon and six bogas to pole us up to Honda. The wind had left us, and from there to the termination of our voyage it was a fight of flesh and blood with an angry, turbulent river.

The *toldo*, or covering of a bongo, is shaped not unlike the top of an express-wagon, in order to carry off the rain. It is constructed of large split cane, and extends about three-fourths of the entire length of the bongo. On the forward deck our cooking was done; aft, we erected an awning, which we occupied with the patroon. Our bogas were all young men, and models for a sculptor. Their life is a hard one, and they never attain old age—seldom see forty years. When at work they are scantily clothed, and I have seen blood running down their backs from the stings of swarming insects. They carry a heavy pole sixteen feet in length, upon one end of which is a wooden fork; this they plant on the shore, the other end against the naked shoulder, when they throw their entire weight upon the pole, walking the length of the *toldo*. As we had six bogas, they worked in companies of three, and in this manner forced our rudely shaped boat against a current of from four to eight miles an hour, with a tropical sun burning their exposed bodies, while at times the thermometer marked 120. No slave was ever driven by cruel task master through a more fiery ordeal of suffering—endured, too, with so much patience and courage. For thirty-two days these men worked on uncomplainingly until the voyage was ended, living upon salt meat and plantains, receiving for their completed work

\$14 each—not 50 cents a day! At night, when the mosquito-bars were erected upon the sandy beach, and our watch-fires lighted, the scene was not unlike a tented field, although our bogas did not strikingly resemble regulars, but in the red glare of the fire reminded one of savages, and suggested all manner of unpleasant fancies.

Our mosquito-bars were made of thick checked goods, the same old-fashioned stuff that our grandmothers wore for their check-aprons. In using this material one is protected, not alone from myriads of mosquitoes, but from scorpions, centipedes, and a vast army of unnamed tormentors. You are also shielded from the malarious night-air freighted with death. But the heat! I wish I could convey to you an idea of it. One day, in passing through an arm of the river, the thermometer, under the shade of the awning, marked 130°; at what point, think you, does it stand at night, with the bar tucked in carefully and closely about you? Would that I could describe the sensation experienced the first time one seeks repose under these protectors. In the beginning there is the sense of safety and security; you laugh at the dense cloud of mosquitoes that dashes itself against your bar with a vain cry for admission. Soon, though, you feel an oppressive sense of suffocation, and a strong desire to tear open your bar, if but for one breath of fresh air. Then you remember the enemy without, and by sheer force of will you resist the temptation, but grow more and more desperate each second. "I cannot endure it longer," you think; but you can and must! "I shall die!" you gasp—no, death never comes by this torture. Have patience; one moment more. There! the flood-gates are upon; perspiration starts in torrents, such as you never before dreamed of, and relief is almost instantaneous; you feel positively happy. From this point of experience you are cool and calm, sleeping like an infant in its mother's arms.

Six days of severe toil brought us to Morales. In walking through the town a very natural question arises. What employment have these people? Well, it is difficult to tell. You may dwell among them without knowing how they live. Nothing surprises them except an earthquake! They are never in a hurry; "*mañana*"—that is, to-morrow—meets their wants in times of greatest urgency, and as *mañana* never comes they are always tranquil! When marched out for execution they are undisturbed and do not ask for mercy, but if at breakfast simply beg for time to finish their coffee and cigar! They are always ready to be shot, but never ready to *work* until to-morrow. The enervating climate apologizes for them every hour of the day! Drop a thorough "live Yankee" down there, and twelve months will take all the "go-ahead" out of him! A tropical climate destroys ambition, endeavor, and the love of gold.

The standard of comfort is so low, and wants so few, that the precious metals are almost valueless to them. When the time arrives that a new garment is an unavoidable necessity, they wash the gold from the earth at their own doors—but they wash no more than is absolutely needed to purchase the desired article! Why should they work? These children of the Great Father live on His bounty, and luxuriate in the abundance He has provided for all their necessities. The vast forests which border this noble river afford space for thousands of homes, where any one is at liberty to settle, free of expense.

An enterprising man will take his axe, go into the woods and fell a tree sufficiently large to make a canoe; after it is completed he selects a site for his cottage, clears a space of one or two acres, and begins the erection of his house, which is constructed of cane and roofed with leaves of the palm-tree. Not many days are required to finish it, after which he employs himself upon the grounds. Six months' work, at intervals, will cover his cleared land with plantains, bananas, yuccas, and a variety of vegetables. In process of time his harvest begins to mature. He moves his family into his cottage, swings his hammock, cuts down

the first ripe plantains, hanging the enormous bunches under a simple shed constructed for that purpose, that they may be easily reached, prepares his small net for fishing, and his life-work is ended. A fortune secured in less than one year, the enjoyment of which he enters upon as a reward of his labors. One hour's work every ten days upon his plantation, and it will last a hundred years. The solvency of railroads, savings banks, or insurance companies, do not disturb his contentment, or render unhappy his restful life; his future is insured against any such contingencies.

The tobacco he requires is produced with little labor. Catching the fish his family need is an amusement, and at the nearest town he purchases salt. A stew of fish and plantains is a dainty meal, more relished than roast-beef and plum-pudding. This is a primitive but a satisfactory life for him, and may be far more useful than the phantoms many of us pursue. This man is truly rich, for his independence brings contentment. He would not exchange his home and mode of existence for the wealth and palaces of the Rothschilds. Our hero has reached the goal of his ambition, and enjoys it. The Rothschilds have obtained \$2,400,000,000, and still reach out for more! The contented man of whom we speak smokes his cigar, dreams in his hammock, has a quiet conscience, and no fear of creditors. With him reverie holds perpetual sway.

The plantain is a fruit of such vast importance to the inhabitants of tropical countries that a few words regarding it may be of interest to you. When it is ripe it appears like the banana, though larger, and has a raw taste like an unripe banana. It grows upon a succulent stalk, from ten to fifteen feet high, and from twelve to twenty inches in diameter at base; upon rich soil the fruit becomes very large and the bunches enormous; only one bunch grows upon each stalk, and when it is cut down a "child," as the natives call it, has germinated from the roots of the stalk destroyed, which in turn matures. With little attention, this production may be continued a century on the same ground. When the bunches commence to ripen, the *macheta*, a kind of short sword, is stuck into the stalk, and the weight of the heavy fruit brings it to the ground. Plantain may be eaten in its natural state, but is generally roasted, fried or boiled, and is palatable cooked in any way. More than one-half of the entire population of Colombia subsist principally upon this fruit. It is both bread and meat to them, and is said to contain more nourishment than anything we eat.

A favorite dish throughout the Republic is a stew made of beef, pork, plantain, squash, yucca, potato, and aracacha! Two of these vegetables are unknown in our country. The universal drink of the native population is *chichi*. It is made from rice, also from corn, and is generally used in a partially fermented condition. Intoxication, however, is almost unknown.

Some miles above Morales, the Magdalena puts forth a right arm that runs several leagues, nearly parallel with the river, and may in time become of more importance to the Republic than the principal stream. Upon this arm is located El Puerto Nacional, to which place a portion of the produce of the State of Santandar is sent for exportation. Back from this port, up in the mountains, is situated the flourishing town of Cucuta, one of the great centers of coffee production and trade; much of the crop reaches the United States and England through Maracaibo. A few years ago the earth opened and swallowed a large part of Cucuta, and some 10,000 of her inhabitants.

Three days and a half more of work and quiet suffering brings us to San Pablo (Saint Paul), a poor town with a great name, which we shall remember, as the first rain of the season came upon us here. Now another trouble appears, for the river rises rapidly; a swifter current impedes our progress, and the caving banks, falling trees and floating logs require constant care and watchfulness. For two days our brave bogas literally hauled our bongo up stream, by

the limbs of trees ; at one time the bank caved, fell upon us, nearly capsizing our craft, and away went four bogas sliding into the river, our prepared dinner disappearing with them. The bogas soon scrambled on board, minus the dinner, however ; a little further on, as a sort of addendum to the catastrophe, a decayed tree dashed itself directly across us ! Fortunately it broke in falling, thus preventing our shipwreck.

Bogas when at work utter a monotonous sound in chorus, except when in passing under the limbs of a tree they espy a hornet's nest—then they proceed with the least possible noise. One day, not having perceived the nest, they were pushing the bongo up stream with an unusually jubilant sound, when lo ! without warning, the hornets, like the Philistines of old, were upon our Sampsons. What then ? Was there a shout ?—a hand to hand fight with the enemy ? Not so ! In an instant over they went into the river—patroon, cook, bogas—without one word or sign of parting. We were sitting under the toldo, but hearing the splash comprehended the danger, and immediately covered ourselves with blankets. After remaining a few moments in this hot wrapping, we ventured to look out—not a hornet, not a boga in sight, our bongo drifting down stream as fast as a rapid current could carry us, but not a man to be seen ! Presently one head appeared, then another and another, until all came to the surface, when, cautiously and comically peering about, they secured their poles and hats, swam to the bongo, rowed it ashore, and making fast to a tree coolly sat down, and in a moment each man was solemnly removing dead hornets from his hair. Never shall I forget the sight ! I laughed until my sides ached, watching their great bronzed figures, sitting in sullen silence, as I recalled their ignominious defeat, worse than Bull Run.

Eighteen miles above this point we reach Angostura, where the river is forced between high rocky embankments. The current here is said to run nine miles an hour. The velocity is fearful ! Steamers have been detained here several days, not having sufficient power to force their way through the boiling waters. We started at 6 A. M., and were drawn through the angry pass with hawsers by the strength of all on board, and at 10 A. M. arrived at Nare. Here all passengers for Antioquia disembark, and leaving the Magdalena go up the Rio Nare for a few leagues, where they again land, and then on mules, after days of laborious travel, reach their homes.

Antioquia is the richest state in Colombia, and Medellin, the capital, one of the best-built cities. I think it was during the reign of Philip II, that the Jews were expelled from Spain, and a colony petitioned to be allowed to settle in New Grenada, which was granted. They landed at Carthagena, crossed to the Magdalena, and made their way up that river to Nare, 400 miles. From this point they toiled over high mountains to the table-lands of the State of Antioquia. In the course of time their rabbis and teachers died ; they dropped their form of worship, and became Roman Catholics. But their national characteristics of complexion, features and business habits could not be blotted out, and wherever you meet an Antioquian you will say, "That man is a Jew." I have seen no race of men in any part of South America equal to them in form and feature. Their enterprise is that of their nation in this land. The exportation of gold from their state has been for 200 years from six to eight millions of dollars per annum ! The gold-fields of Antioquia appear inexhaustible. This state may truly be called the *El Dorado* of the world. Gold may also be found in great abundance in Choco, and other parts of the Republic. On the Magdalena, after a rain, I have seen the natives washing gold from the earth at their doors.

For more than two centuries, the gold from Antioquia was carried in canoes, down the Magdalena, in charge of but two men—and unarmed at that ! It was

delivered at Barranca—transported over the public highways by native Indians, and safely deposited at Carthagena. More than a thousand million dollars have been thus transported without the first robbery ever having occurred; and yet two determined men could at any time have taken the treasure. Suppose a canoe were to pass down the Mississippi, or the Hudson, each month, under like circumstances, how many trips do you fancy would be made without molestation? In honesty, these Indian people are infinitely our superiors. Nare is unhealthy and unattractive. We gave our bogas one day's rest there, and then pushed on to Buena Vista, 45 miles distant. Between these two places are many rosas and an amount of cultivation decidedly interesting.

Acosta is my authority for the following incident as having occurred near this place. The natives of Colombia never having seen a horse until the invaders made their first appearance, were inspired with the utmost terror upon beholding those animals and their riders. They regarded them as centaurs or gods, who had come to destroy them, and their horror was unbounded when they saw the Spaniards dismount! In wild agony they cast themselves down precipices and into roaring torrents, regardless of life. Upon one occasion a company of Spaniards were encamped on the banks of the river preparing to pass over and attack a large force of Indians upon the opposite shore. Three of their horses, tormented beyond endurance by insects, broke from their fastenings, and rushing into the stream, swam to the other side. Instantly the most ungovernable fear and panic possessed the natives. With shouts of terror they turned and fled; the entire force were completely routed, and scattered in all directions!

Thirty miles above Buena Vista is the most dangerous place yet seen. One-half of the river is a bed of rocks, through which the water roars and dashes like an angry monster. Above, the mountains are closing in around us; and their snowy peaks are frequently seen, in our turnings, at the most unexpected times and places. How grandly they stand in the warm light of the morning sun! And just before us, upon a far-reaching plain, is a wonderful, bewildering sight, where a score of hills, whose forms have changed by the washing of ages, rear their fantastic shapes hundreds of feet high. They appear cut and twisted into broken pinnacle, spire and dome, surmounting the buildings of a vast city tumbling into ruins; and as they are touched by the morning sun, it seems as if the torch of the heavens is lighting up the skeleton of the centuries!

And now we are drawing near to *Las Siete Vueltas de la Madre de Deos* (The Seven Turns of the Mother of God). Strange name for seven turns in a river! They are dangerous windings; but the air is more so—at every breath you inhale malaria of the most poisonous character. Within fifty miles of this landing thousands have perished from these pestilential exhalations.

Another day brings us through most picturesque scenes and dangerous navigation; but we land in safety at the foot of the rapids, where ends malaria and the lower Magdalena river. Honda, 600 miles from the coast, has a population of about 5,000, and is situated at the commencement of the rapids we have now reached, which terminate navigation, as to ascend these mad waters is an impossibility. Consequently, all goods for the interior are disembarked here and placed in Government stores until mules are provided to transport the merchandise to Bogota.

While this is being done, let us walk along the foaming rapids up to this 300-years-old town. The terrible unrest of this vast body of water, as it rolls and tumbles over its rocky bed, inspires one with amazement and a sense of fear. It is a continuous and steep slope for three miles; and the mighty torrent, as it rises and falls over its uneven foundation, roars like Niagara, and sends its groans up the mountain-sides, until the distant echoes seem like faint moans of agony!

At length we reach Honda, and pass the Guali river, which plunges through the town in tumult and pours itself into the Magdalena near the commencement of the rapids. Honda means a sling; and as you view the town from some of the neighboring elevations, you can easily imagine it is suspended and swinging between two lofty mountains. The houses are generally built one story high and closely together, with thick walls and tiled roofs. There are several churches. The streets are narrow, but well paved. Two stone bridges span the Guali. There are no hotels, so we hire a house and a cook during our stay. For 100 years the Spanish government made this town the grand depot for European merchandise; and from here it was sent, upon mules, over almost inaccessible mountains to far-off Quito and Lima. From this point the navigation of the upper Magdalena begins; the produce of the upper valley, mountains and table-lands, being brought here for exportation.

Tobacco alone, at one time, was valued at \$6,000,000 per annum; and 20,000 bales of *guina*, or Peruvian bark, are now shipped yearly; also gold and silver, hides, coffee, etc. A few hours' ride from Honda brings one to the silver mines of Santa Anna, now worked by an English company, which have been producing silver for generations, and it is not possible to tell how many hundreds of millions of dollars they have given to commerce. After two days' detention, we embark in a canoe and carefully make our way up the stream, hugging the bank, until our patroon deems we can paddle across without risk of being swept over the rapids. When he gives the orders to push off, it is a moment of great excitement. As we approach the opposite shore, we drift nearer and nearer the dreadful, roaring, boiling, seething torrent; and just when it appears that no power can save us from being drawn into the midst of its terrors, a counter-current catches our frail bark and sends us in safety up to the landing. We find our mules waiting for us, and mounting we start for Bogota. A few hours' travel brings us to the base of Alto del Sargento (The Sergeant), one of the mountains over which we must pass to reach the heart of the Andes. This climbing is no child's play, but hard work for man and beast. Half-way up a heavy shower envelops us in the wet folds of its dark garments, and the lightning plays about us in most uncomfortable proximity; but in ten minutes we come up out of the clouds. Above us is the clear blue sky and bright sunshine; below, the blackness of darkness, pierced through with chain-lightning and filled with crashing thunder!

In two and a half hours we reach the summit—7,500 feet. After riding along the narrow ridge a short distance, suddenly, through an opening in the timber and brush, a view bursts upon us which is far beyond any power of mine to describe. I gaze in silent wonder and devotion. Spread out 7,000 feet below, extending a hundred miles in length and thirty in breadth, is the upper valley of the Magdalena—the river winding through it like a silver ribbon—the villages upon its banks—the hills forming the boundary of this magnificent valley—buttressed by mountain upon mountain piled, until the highest, covered with eternal snow, 10,000 feet above our look-out, forms a frame for the grand picture. Every vestige of the storm has passed, and the shadows of fleecy clouds chase each other across the landscape, as if in wild sport; while lovely Ambalema, with its wealth of agriculture, lies cradled there in silent beauty. The grandeur and magnificence of this view no brush can paint or word-picture delineate.

Continuing our journey along this ridge two or three miles, we begin descending, and soon behold before us the valley and village of Guaduas. This scene is a gem, perfect in setting and detail; and I cannot but think that Mr. Church, our eminent artist, drew the sketch of his renowned picture 'The Heart of the Andes' from this lovely valley. Guaduas is a well-built town, with a popu-

lation of 4,000, and stands on the foot-hills of Alto del Trigo—Mountain of Wheat. Its temperature is from 75° to 85°; and it is a place of resort during the dry seasons for persons of wealth, who come here for health's sake from the colder table-lands.

The coffee cultivated near Guaduas is of superior quality; and as its process of cultivation is but little understood, allow me a few words upon the subject. The fruit grows on a shrub much resembling our currant-bush, and but little larger. These stand in hills, intersected by clean paths. The foliage is of an intense green, and when the fruit is ripe it resembles perfectly our red cherries and is most agreeable to the taste. It is then gathered and thrown into large vats, filled with water, and is there allowed to remain a few days, until the pulp decays and rises to the surface, when a sluice is opened and it passes away with the water. The pits are taken from the bottom of the vat, spread upon hides and dried, and placed in sacks. The pits are the coffee we drink.

We left the valley of Guaduas in the early morning, and at mid-day reached the highest point of Alto del Trigo. New and beautiful features of scenery met us at every turn of the road, until at length we entered a cañon, and as we emerged the broad valley of Villeta, flooded with sunshine, burst upon our sight. So unexpected was this view, that for a moment we thought it superior to that of El Sargento. But it is not so vast, although still more wild and incomprehensible. After gazing at the wonderful panorama in speechless admiration, we began the descent—down, down, down, as if there were no end! But at 6 P. M. we arrived at Villeta. Here we waited two days for our cargoes, and had an opportunity to look at the place. It is not nearly so well built, nor is the location so pleasant as Guaduas. The streets are paved with cobblestones, but there are no side-walks. The town has a good church, but poor dwellings. A river runs through the town, whose waters are inky black. The impression made upon my mind by this valley is one of disappointment.

Our cargoes having arrived, we left Villeta on Tuesday, at 8 A. M., our caravan numbering eighteen mules—fifteen loaded, and three with saddles. Up the mountain we traveled without detention until 4 P. M., and still we could see the place we had left in the morning. Onward and upward we went. The road—there was no road, only a narrow path—was so wretchedly bad that, much of the way, our animals sank knee-deep in the mud, then scrambled over slippery clay, where it was almost impossible for them to retain their footing, or over great rocks in which 300 years of travel have worn deep holes.

Night overtook us, and the pall of darkness was so dense we could see nothing—not even the heads of the mules we were riding. We did not try to guide them, as our efforts might have thrown them and ourselves down some steep precipice; so we allowed them to pick their own way, and at 8 P. M. they brought us in safety to El Acerradero. We were up in the clouds, and the transition from 95° to 45° in this rarified atmosphere produced a stinging sensation. After an early breakfast, on the next day, we mounted our tired mules and finished our upward journey, by a ride over the most infamous trail we had yet seen, to Alto del Roble; from which point we commenced our descent to the plains of Bogota. Strange and incredible as it may appear, the entire road from Honda to this Alto del Roble is only a mule-path, which was probably traveled a thousand years before the advent of the Spaniard. There are no words in the English language which can convey an idea of its dreadful condition in the rainy season.

Cases of merchandise are often too large, or of too fragile a nature, to be transported on mules. These are carried upon the backs of men and women over the road we have just described. An extra price is paid for this labor; and we met large numbers of persons engaged in this work—some carrying

cases weighing 200 pounds, and I have heard of one woman carrying 300 pounds from Honda to Bogota! Her figure would not be admired in fastidious society; but she was certainly more useful in her day and generation than many of the more elegant of her sex.

We are now supposed to be 11,000 feet above the sea, and about 2,200 feet above the plains of Bogota. From Los Robles down, the road does not improve; but when we reach the plain we find a good carriage-way, and something over an hour brings us to Facatativa—a town of some 10,000 inhabitants. It is market-day, and the grand plaza presents a scene of great activity. Strange sights and sounds all around us. Hundreds of horses and mules, with their cargoes and human freight, throng the roads leading to and from the town; hundreds more on foot, clad in unthought-of costumes, seem to regard *us* with a curiosity akin to our own. We wait two hours for the arrival of our luggage, and then start out on a good, broad road for the city, lying twenty-five miles before us upon the opposite side of the plain.

We are now again upon historic ground, and as we have a long ride before us, let me try and beguile the time by telling you something about this “Heart of the Andes,” and the ancient people who dwelt here. The table-lands of Bogota, over which we are now riding, are 150 miles long and 30 miles wide. They are completely surrounded by mountains, which rise to an elevation of from 1,000 to 2,500 feet above the plain. This region has been in cultivation many centuries; before the Conquest it supported more than a million people, and the Spaniards have been scratching the soil and taking off large crops over 300 years. No fertilizers are used, and deep ploughing is unknown. I doubt if so inexhaustible a soil can elsewhere be found upon the face of the earth. The Chibcha nation, who occupied the plains and adjacent slopes, numbered 1,200,000. They were a pacific race, far in advance of the coast-nations, at the time of the Conquest, and were considerably governed and greatly attached to their rulers. They were an agricultural nation, living absolutely upon a vegetable diet. They had neither sheep, cattle nor horses. Lying, robbery and murder were almost unknown among them. I lived with their descendants nearly ten years, and have no recollection of a murder having occurred during all that time. When we look at the civilization and crime of our country, and compare our moral condition with that of this Indian nation, is it not pertinent to inquire what has caused our deterioration? We consume great quantities of animal food. The Chibchas used only vegetable diet. Can the difference of food make the difference in character?

The Chibchas were brave, and famed for their gallantry in battle. After 300 years of brutal treatment, calculated to degrade the race, we find their descendants still heroic and fearless in act. I have seen whole battalions, composed exclusively of this race, fighting as determinedly and tenaciously as any Anglo-Saxon army. The Chibchas were especially celebrated for the tender care of the women, the sick and the aged. The Lord seemed to have breathed His own great love into the national heart. Their laws were framed and executed faithfully, with a view to recognize woman in her true position in the social scale. These primitive men realized the fact that degrading woman degraded their own manhood, and that elevating her ennobled themselves; that woman is not inferior to, but a part of man. Does Christianity teach anything more sacred? A very unique law was in force among them, the consequences of which were radical and far-reaching, resulting in the peculiar care and tenderness of women to which I have referred. When a wife died the husband was obliged to remain five years unwedded, and console himself as best he could. If the secret of this nation's many virtues rested upon this law, it cannot be too quickly placed upon our own statute-books.

The descendants of the Chibchas are a kind-hearted, gentle people. I have very often met them in the most retired and dangerous passes in the mountains, where they could have robbed and slain one without risk of discovery, but never upon passing them did they fail to lift their hats, and say "*Dios vaya con usted, mi amo!*" (God go with you, my master!) I have employed them in various capacities many years, and never lost anything by them, while my own countrymen during the same time swindled me repeatedly. You may load your mules with gold and silver, as is frequently done, and travel all over the country with these men absolutely without fear or danger. The descent of the Spaniards upon the plains of Bogota has proved a pestilential fire to this noble, virtuous nation. The 1,200,000 have been reduced to 200,000, and these are but "hewers of wood and drawers of water." They are allowed to grow up in ignorance, and are the facile tools of demagogues and unscrupulous politicians. The Chibchas, as a nation—their glory, their manhood, their high aspirations—have been buried in the tomb of Spanish civilization.

Allow me just here to call your attention to the prophetic words of Las Casas, the Spanish historian, addressed to Charles V in 1542: "If the past course of treatment is continued, the Indian nations of South America will be destroyed, and the injury that will result to Spain, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the dumb will proclaim! I have not long to live, yet before I go hence my conscience demands that I make this protest to your Majesty, and I call all the saints and angels in heaven and inhabitants of earth to witness this solemn announcement, that unless the laws and penalties for the protection of the aborigines are put in active execution by those empowered to do so, the present population will be destroyed as they have been in the Antillas, and for these sins God has to chastise us with horrible chastisements, and perhaps totally destroy Spain!"

Prophetic words, which are being fulfilled before heaven and earth to-day! Not men alone, but nations reap what they sow. This law is inwrought with the universe. The balances are being struck, and to nations as well as individuals a day of reckoning comes, with a like certainty to both. Look at Spain, in all the magnificence of her greatness at the time of the Conquest. Behold her humiliating imbecility to-day. Then think of this prophecy of the tender-hearted Las Casas, uttered 335 years ago. Once she defied the world in arms, to-day she cannot conquer Cuban patriots! Let us not forget, ladies and gentlemen, that our injustice to the red man is being written out in God's book. We, too, must reap what we sow, and be judged by the record of our daily lives in the Supreme Court of the Universe, from whose decision there is no appeal.

During this digression we have passed through a splendid farming country, seeing many fine old residences, until we have reached the village of Fontebaun, which has more the appearance of our own suburban towns than anything we have yet seen. A few miles more brings us to Puente Arranda, one league from the city of Bogota. We have only a partial view of it, but a grand look at the mountains in the background. From this point a broad avenue leads up to the Plaza de San Victorino. This square is given up to bull-fights for one week during the yearly church-festivals. Calle de los Plateros—or "Street of the Silversmiths"—leads to Calle Real, and this, the Broadway of Bogota, conducts us to the residence of the United States Minister, where our journey terminates.

The city of Bogota, famous in history for 300 years as the seat of government, is built upon the eastern side of the plain. It is 8,863 feet above the sea, and back of it the mountains rise 2,500 feet higher, the church of Monserrate crowning the highest peak, 11,363 feet above the ocean, one of the most elevated

situations of any church in the world. Bogota was founded by Queseda in 1538, and has a population of about 70,000. The average temperature of the city is 62°, and will not vary four degrees during the year. The streets and side-walks are narrow but well paved; through the middle of the former streams of water run down the slope, and the city is supplied with an abundance from fountains placed in all the plazas. The buildings are constructed of *adobe*, bricks and stone, with roofs of tile. There are no chimneys, as fires are not required except for cooking, and for that purpose charcoal is used.

Bogota contains a noble cathedral, with dome and towers; twenty-six other churches, many of them beautiful; nine monasteries, three nunneries, three colleges, a university, schools of chemistry and mineralogy, a national academy, observatory, public library, theatre, botanical garden, halls of congress, post-office, custom-house and palatial private residences of great value. Nearly half the city at one time was the property of the church, but the government has confiscated a large part of her vast estates. There are many scientific men there, who generally have been educated in Europe, and the opinion is prevalent that the educational institutions of the old country are superior to those of the United States. Among the white population of the city intellectual culture is more universal than with us. Society is refined, and the pleasures of social intercourse are fully enjoyed. Many persons among us deem that the standard of morality in South American states is below our own. That, I am quite sure, is a mistaken idea. They have the good taste, at least, to refrain from those public exhibitions of questionable manners so frequently seen here.

Millionaires you can count by the score, but the so-called aristocracy of wealth is unknown; good feeling and good taste are universal. The wealthy never make themselves vulgarly conspicuous by display. Intellectual culture may not be so thorough with the ladies as with gentlemen, but in the intercourse of daily life you would scarcely miss it. Their conversation and manners are gracious and graceful, and there is a beauty in their speech all permeated with the glory of their incomparable language. She may not always be beautiful in feature, but the musical voice is filled with a pathos and grace indescribable. The conversational tone appears as if cultivated by high art, since it is always musical and soothing; a Spanish lady's voice will fascinate when all other charms have failed. The dress of the ladies is after the latest Parisian fashion, and no more elegant costumes than theirs can be found. Gentlemen also follow Parisian style. Horseback-riding is the favorite out-door amusement for all. They are rapid and graceful riders. The roads leading through suburban towns and places of resort are good, many of them being hedged with rare and beautiful flowers, which load the atmosphere with rich perfume, and large parties of equestrians may daily be seen, dashing up and down these avenues, apparently as light-hearted and gay as happy children.

Shortly after my arrival at Bogota I was introduced to Don Pepi Paris, a gentleman who had held very close relations of friendship with Bolivar when he was President of Colombia. The emerald mines of Mozo, belonging to the government, had been a source of large revenue in former years, but at the time of which I speak were not sufficiently productive to be very profitable. General Bolivar, wishing to show a favor to Don Pepi, offered him these mines at a nominal rent, which offer was accepted. Work in the mines was commenced and continued several years, but the results were not satisfactory, and becoming embarrassed in his financial affairs, Don Pepi requested Bolivar to relieve him of his contract with the government. This Bolivar refused to do, insisting that he should make one more trial, and if not successful he would then release him. Bolivar had a strong presentiment that the emeralds would be found in abundance if the work was continued, and even suggested the direction in which

they should proceed. He induced Don Pepi to continue the work, and what was the result? Within one month they opened a vein of emeralds, and took out nearly three millions of dollars' worth.

Don Pepi possessed a suburban home of great beauty, which he presented to his friend and benefactor. Shortly after this event, some of the officers of the army conceived the idea of making Bolivar Dictator. In pursuance of their plans, arrangements were made for a grand dinner at this country seat. Invitations were given to the officers who were in the secret, Don Pepi being the only civilian thus honored, as it was well understood he was a devoted friend of Bolivar. The appointed day arrived, the guests assembled, took their places at table, and, after partaking of the dinner, were ready to complete their conspiracy. The toasts were first in order. A leading general requested those present to fill their glasses. The company rose to their feet, when he said: "Gentlemen, I propose the health of the President of Colombia—may he soon be proclaimed Dictator!" As the glasses were raised to drink, Don Pepi's voice was heard, and all turned towards the speaker. With flashing eyes, he proudly exclaimed: "When Bolivar becomes Dictator, may his blood flow as this wine!" and dashed it over his shoulder to the floor.

These fearless words crushed out the conspiracy then and there; and their ambitious hopes disappeared like the "baseless fabric of this vision." The patriot's voice snapped the nearly forged chains of slavery, and Colombia was free! Don Pepi loved Bolivar, but he loved his country more. After the "Great Liberator" had passed on to another sphere, Don Pepi went to Italy and superintended the casting of a bronze statue of Bolivar, which he had transported over the Andes and placed in the centre of the Grand Plaza of Bogota, where it stands to-day, a mute witness of the power and truth of holy friendship.

In the dark hour of our country's future, may she not want for men who will love her as Don Pepi loved Colombia!

I felt that I was especially fortunate, on going to this far-away land, in having letters of introduction to many of its most eminent citizens. Among them was one brave, noble woman, La Señora Cayetana Rodrigues, then nearly eighty years of age. She was respected by all; those of opposite political opinions being compelled to esteem her for her perfect integrity and peerless characteristics. She was known as "La Patriota," and deserved this distinction among so many of her loyal countrywomen. Shortly after my arrival, I received an invitation to dine at her house. The dinner was given in honor of President Lopez and his newly-chosen cabinet; he being the first successful candidate of the Liberal, which was opposed to that of the Church party. La Señora was a power to the former—one strongly relied upon; for, as we all know, woman can often assist a cause by words and examples of self-sacrifice, which outweigh deeds written in blood on the battle-field!

The occasion was a memorable one, for many reasons. It had a strong political significance, and the dinner was served with great state, on a complete service of gold! Afterward I learned a pathetic incident in the life of this noble woman, which seems like a tale from the "Arabian Nights" or some stirring, old-time romance. She had a son, who inherited from his mother a love of justice and liberty! He was detected in an effort to overthrow the then despotic government, and, after a hasty trial, was sentenced to be shot. His mother, frantic with grief, used every available means to save him, until it seemed as if even a mother's ingenuity had been exhausted, and nothing remained but an acceptance of the terrible fate of her child. But, after she had bidden him adieu in the purple twilight of the day preceding his intended execution, she resolved upon one more effort, again to humble herself before the highest officer

of the government her son had offended, and on her knees plead for his pardon! She threw herself at the officer's feet, and, with sobs and tears, pitifully begged for the life so dear to her. "Name a ransom," she said; "there must be something you desire more than this one human life!" Touched by her sorrow, and perhaps tired of her importunity, he replied: "Give me his weight in gold, and your plea shall be granted!" She rushed to her home, and soon upon the Plaza, the place appointed for his execution, lay a heap of the shining ore! Her son was brought forth, placed upon the scales; then the gold was piled up until that outweighed him, when, amidst the wildest excitement and tumult of pleasure of the surrounding spectators, she grasped him by the hand, and in loving triumph bore him away!

Standing on a range of hills east of Bogota, and looking southwest, you can see a solitary snowy mountain, Tolima, 19,000 feet high; and so near does it seem, that one fancies that to throw a stone upon it would be an easy matter; and yet it is one hundred miles away! Many years ago part of the icy dome detached itself and went crashing down the side of the mountain. In its track through the forest, mighty trees that had defied the storms of ages were cut off and swept before it, like grass before the mower's scythe. When it reached the warm country, the melted ice and snow had become a mighty river! Entire villages, and thousands of the inhabitants, were borne on the fearful tide and plunged into the Magdalena! The shadow of the cañon from which this vast body of ice and snow was hurled is yet distinctly visible, even by moonlight.

Cipacquirá, 65 miles from Bogota, is the great centre of salt production, which is sent from there to all parts of the republic. This trade is a government monopoly. A journey through the galleries of this salt-mountain, which has been worked many centuries, is intensely interesting, but we have not time to explore its mysteries to-night.

The emerald mines of Mozo are not the smallest wonders of this land of marvellous beauty. They are four days' journey from the capital, and said to be the only emerald-producing mines in the world. Time fails me, or I could tell you of the natural bridge of Pandi, and the Sumapaz, or "River of Great Peace," which flows so quietly under its rough, rocky arch, and in whose sweetish-tasting waters *lignum-vitæ* becomes a petrefaction in six months!

The Indians have a tradition that the Plain of Bogota was at one time the bed of a lake; and that the Great Spirit stretched his magic wand across the mountain barrier, tearing it asunder and pouring the waters of the lake into the abyss of Taquendama! As you look at the River of Bogota plunging into the gulf, you can scarcely resist yielding a belief to the old story. Baron Humboldt measured the Falls of Taquendama, and found them nearly 600 feet high.

The people of this ancient city are friendly and hospitable to foreigners; ever ready to show them attention and kindness. Once make yourself master of their language, and you find every house a home, where you are treated with a consideration most delicate. If one does not secure friends in Bogota, it will be because he does not deserve them.